

New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority

Chair: Peter Burling
Vice Chair: Katherine Hersh

Minutes

November 19, 2010

10:00 am

LOB 201

Present: Chair Peter Burling, Vice-Chair Kathy Hersh, Rep. Bouchard, Kerrie Diers, David Preece, Ray Gagnon, Mike Izbicki, Nancy Larson, Bill Lipfert, Jay Minkarah, Kit Morgan, Tim Moore, Steve Pesci, Mike Tardiff, Malcolm Taylor, Bruce Woodruff

- I. Call to order – Chair Burling called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.
- II. Public Input – Chair Burling asked for public input – there was none.
- III. Minutes –

David Preece made a motion to approve the minutes of October 29, 2010, which was seconded by Mike Tardiff. The motion was approved unanimously.

- IV. Long range transportation plan – Response to question from member of the public at the last meeting regarding the lack of emphasis on passenger rail in this draft. Mike Pillsbury had offered to follow up on this question at the last meeting. As he is not here today, we will follow up with Mike Pillsbury.
- V. NH Capitol Corridor Updates
 - Schedule – we are still waiting on this.
 - FTA and FRA funds
 - i. FRA funds – need to receive grant agreement from FRA, and then need to receive approval from Long Range Capital Budget Overview Committee.
 - ii. FTA – local match required by FTA funds is currently a footnote to use these funds. Legislation would need to be introduced to eliminate this provision.
 - Meeting with FTA and FRA – Kit Morgan provided an overview of the meeting. The state is not allowed to use toll credits for FRA funds. We could use the prior expenditures for rail, but the state has none. At this point, need to have cash match. Mike Izbicki asked if we could use the station expenditures on the Downeaster line as match. Kit Morgan will check into it. We can't use funds that have already been matched, but we can explore if other funds would be eligible.

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Steve Pesci said we should explore these expenditures. Peter Burling asked if there were a subcommittee who could look at this issue. Pesci said yes, he would be willing to look into this with the three other station communities. Rep. Bouchard said If the State received \$500,000 from other sources, would not need to go do Capital Overview. The only reason to go there is if there are any changes to the capital expenditure.

- Chair Burling asked the question - How do we proceed under new legislative climate? Steve Pesci remarked that the key is to framing the discussion: infrastructure, economic development, NH linked into industry with rest of country. This is about economic development.

Jay Minkarah stated that we're not asking for \$300 million dollars right now. We're looking at the planning grant to answer questions. The planning grant is our focus, we need to be focused on getting the match lined up. Rep. Bouchard suggested we have time to change purpose, and there is an opportunity to change that when appropriations come up to committee.

Kathy Hersh stated that this is not a new issue. We have this same discussion. There was a survey distributed via email last week and 3500 people have signed on to this cause to say this is important. We don't have a lot of time. We don't know when this opportunity to access construction money will be available so we should have our act together

Kit Morgan said he has drafted a schedule and will finalize it after this issue is worked out. DOT met with 2 staff from FRA and 2 from FTA to talk about the scope of work for the 2 projects and how to mesh them together. The FTA work needs to be done first from Nashua to Manchester. The FRA work can't be done until the FTA work is complete. Need to look at the alternatives and funding, identify preferred alternative and then progress. We can begin with the FTA work as soon as we get the grant approved. Need to submit a detailed schedule of work, reviewed by both agencies. Then we can submit the grant to FTA and get started. In the terms of sequence of work, we are not losing any time. In terms of FRA, we committed to the match and we need to get those details cleaned up. The FRA has a lot on its plate and they are able to give us the room to get those detailed ironed out.

Kathy Hersh asked if there is any risk to starting to work on the FTA grant without having detailed the FRA grant. Kit Morgan said that not really, since both agencies will be working closely together to make sure that work.

Jay Minkarah said that we need to conduct the planning grants to answer questions that are outstanding. We need to go from concept to design pretty soon.

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Peter Burling stated that after 3 years of work, we think we can access 1 billion of economic development. We can do this if we answer the essential questions that the planning grant will tell us. We need the hard match for this planning grant to answer these questions.

Kit Morgan said that the advice from FRA was to do a thorough review of all of the alternatives.

Kathy Hersh said that she heard two strategies: “concept to design” and “questions to answers.” Questions to answers might be more easily understood by public.

Jay Minkarah said that we need to reaffirm that accepting this grant and doing the study does not commit us to doing the project.

David Preece would like to explore issue regarding match – are there other revenues that could be available for the match – is CTAP possibility?

Bill Lipfert asked if the funds expended by the airport ridership studies qualify as match? Kit Morgan was unsure if those were eligible match.

Kathy Hersh asked if there is an opportunity to publicize receipt of grant. Peter Burling will ask us to put him into contact with our media contacts.

Steve Pesci suggested that we use the visual of the map that shows the funds that have been granted to other states that shows no funds going to central NH. We are being bypassed. This should be unacceptable to the chambers and economic development organizations in the middle of the state.

Malcolm Taylor asked if we can put together some talking points. Peter Burling will take a crack at doing a draft. David Preece suggested it be based on the paper circulated prior to the elections – he will send to Peter Burling.

Nancy Larson asked if anyone has prepared a press release regarding the announcement. Paul Hodes did, but the NHRTA hasn't.

Peter Burling stated that can't ignore the successes in the state: the Downeaster, the freight traffic in White River Junction. We should start talking about the positive. He will pull together talking points and use the map as a good visual. Have a visual part of power point that highlights the lines and economic impact of those lines.

Ryan Porter from Renaissance Downtowns, a developer from NY, offered his graphic assistance. His firm focuses on development along rail corridors, and will write a letter to support investment in rail line. Focus on rail to stimulate further development.

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Ray Gagnon said that such a statement needs to be circulated to the chamber and businesses in Nashua.

VI. Other Discussion

- Plaistow – Tim Moore provided an update. The project did not receive TIGER II Grant, but still has the CMAQ application which will be presented on Dec 10 to the CMAQ Committee. The MBTA is still agreeing to pay local match. There is \$18 million in CMAQ funding available and \$21 million in requests. Those are pretty good odds. Part of the project would be to purchase rail car and station work. They are calling the agreement with MBTA the Pentucket Partnership based on the RI one. This would eliminate operating expenses for NH in lieu of operating costs, we would be providing the turnaround.
- Enfield Bridge project – This is still on hold. There was a hearing, and the Enfield residents came out in force in favor of eliminating the bridge. There are lots of plans for development along or using the rail corridors. There is a lot of activity in this area. Resolution remains tabled. Our concerns were that the bridge replacement is at an at-grade crossing and this would be wasted if we come down 10-15 years to replace it.
- Steve Peschi volunteered to lead an alternatives fund subcommittee, along with David Preece and NHDOT to explore the match issue.
- Peter Burling will draft and circulate talking points.
- Steve Pesci stated that we need to make sure we talk about how bus-rail partnerships are important and we should look at ways to make these connections work.
- David Preece would like to commend Rep Bouchard on her work on the HB2 report. The Report laid out the issues really well and is timely.

VII Non-public session – none

VIII Adjourn -

David Preece made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Malcom Taylor

Submitted by

Kerrie Diers
NHRTA